

To the Historic Landmark Commission of Austin, Texas:

Thank you all for taking the time to hear our case today. We know that a lot of time and effort goes into this, and we appreciate you reviewing our permit application.

We would also like to apologize for not attending the hearing in person. Every year we take a joint birthday and wedding anniversary trip in May. We booked it some time ago not realizing that Memorial Day would interfere with the regular hearing scheduled for the fourth Monday of each month. Again, we apologize for not being able to attend.

Since we will not be available in person, we wanted to provide a little bit of background on ourselves and our plans for 1207 E 9th St.

### **Background**

We moved here from Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Sarah had a great job opportunity in Austin in 2015, and we decided to give it a shot. It ended up being a great decision. We both like our jobs, the weather, the people, the live music, and (of course) the food. Since we both work in technology, the career opportunities and tech community here are pretty ideal as well.

Beyond that, though, Austin just feels like home. Since we moved here, we've had family move to Houston, Austin, and Lakeway. We spend a lot of time on the green belt and Town Lake trails. We have friends and family who regularly come to visit, and last year we adopted a dog. Austin is the place where we plan to live for a long time.

Since moving here, we have only lived in apartments. The housing market in Austin is quite different than what we were used to in Oklahoma, and it took us a while to save up and figure out where we wanted to live. We are definitely ready for a home where we can have space to host our visitors and also to be part of a nice neighborhood community. And our dog will be very happy to finally have a yard.

### **The Neighborhood**

We have been keeping an eye on the homes in the Central East Austin area for a long time. The location is ideal as it's close enough to where we work that we can spend less time in the car and more time enjoying Austin. It also seems quiet and safe and not too crowded with traffic. It definitely feels like more of a neighborhood community than many of the surrounding areas, and the neighbors we've met so far have been incredibly kind and welcoming.

Beyond just the things that make it a nice place for a young family, we also realize that this neighborhood holds a unique place in the history of Austin. The Our Lady of Guadalupe church across the street is beautiful and was built in 1926 using materials from a much older church and school. The Texas State Cemetery down the street is an amazing preservation of the history of both Austin and the state of Texas with graves going back all the way to the Civil War. We're also easy walking distance from the French Legation historic site, which played a significant role at the time when the French monarchy formally recognized the Republic of Texas as a sovereign nation in the mid-1800s. This site is currently undergoing a massive restoration, and we're very much looking forward to touring when it reopens.

The area within the proposed Robertson/Stuart & Mair Historic District holds many structures and locations that are valuable parts of Austin and Texas history. We're excited to be a part of that.

### **Current State of 1207 E 9th Street**

We purchased 1207 E 9th Street in March of this year. We put an offer on it the same day that we saw it listed. It's a bungalow style house with a large front porch and two partially completed sheds taking up most of the space in the backyard. We knew that this property would take a lot of work to be liveable, but we were so pleased to find something in this neighborhood that we decided to take on the challenge.

We had originally hoped to find an older home that we could live in while we restoring, but that was not an option for this property. We considered maybe restoring this house and then building another unit behind it later, but the more we've looked at it with a builder, architect, and structural engineer, the less feasible this seems.

We met with structural engineer Larry Wu to conduct a review of the property. Based on his observations, Larry noted that the structural members of the buildings on our property are undersized and spaced too far apart. Structural components of all three of the buildings are unsound and do not meet current code. He also noted that the roof is collapsing in the closet off the kitchen.

#### ***Main House:***

The house was abandoned for a number of years and has not had routine maintenance done. The structural issues have resulted in a lot of movement in the foundation. Because of this, the living room and kitchen have noticeably uneven floors, and there are lots of cracks in the ceiling. The roof is in poor shape and is collapsing in several places.



Additionally, there are holes in the walls and roof exposing the inside to moisture and insects.

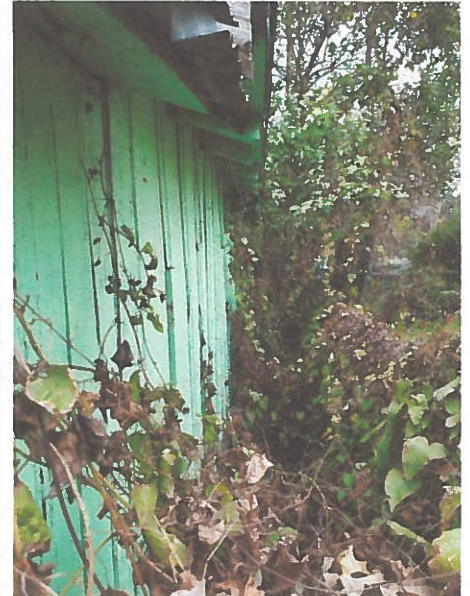




The roof is also collapsing above the back porch.



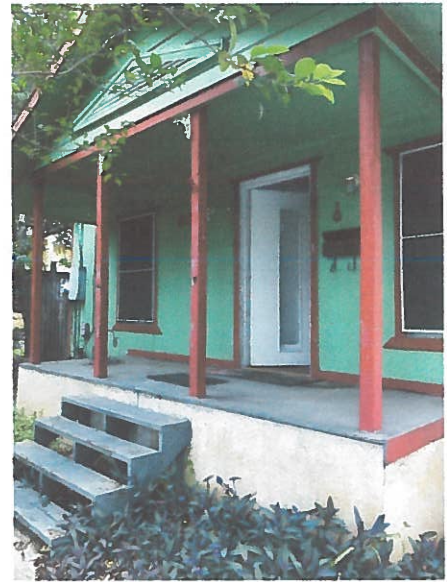
Much of the wiring and plumbing is also not up to code and vegetation has overtaken the external siding



Also, while investigating the history of the house, we discovered that the large front porch is not original to the 1949 construction. We found a City permit to expand the front porch by four feet on both sides in 1995 (permit number: 1995-000372BP). A 1962 Sanborn map shows the house with a small front porch. The other houses in the neighborhood that were built around the same time have much smaller porches as well.



Ex. 1209 E 9th Street, which was built in the same year vs 1207 E 9th Street



***Additional Structures:***

The two sheds in the backyard seem to have been mostly assembled from leftover parts of other building projects and have not been maintained. One is missing walls. A tree has fallen on the other. More photos can be seen in the demolition application.







### **Our Proposed Plan**

We would like to demolish the existing structures on this lot and build one single family home. We'd like it to have enough space that friends or family can stay with us when they are in town and enough of a yard that our dog can play with his dog cousins when they're around.

That said, we do not plan to simply take something away from the character of the neighborhood. During our option period before closing, we met with Cara and obtained the Preservation Plan for the proposed Robertson/Stuart & Mair Historic District. Regardless of when the historic designation becomes official, we plan to design and build to those specifications (outlined in Section 1.4 "New Construction") and will work with the City to make sure we are staying compliant.

We have engaged Luciana Corwin of AHS Design Group to provide architectural services for us. She has been active in East Austin for many years and is familiar with the neighborhood restrictions. In our first meeting with

her, we gave her the design standards from the Preservation Plan. We are still very early on in our discussions with her, but she's on board and excited to help us create something that helps the area maintain its unique character. We are familiar with and plan to adhere to all proposed design specifications including setbacks, height limit, porch specifications, and visual consistency with the other houses in the Robertson/Stuart & Mair district.

We have also talked to Cambridge Custom Homes about handling the construction. Keith Melton is a builder who has been active in East Austin for a long time. He's familiar with the area, the neighborhoods, and the architectural styles therein. He is also on board and excited about the prospect of helping us build something that fits and contributes.

### **Summary**

In a historic neighborhood, demolition should always be a last resort. Based on the engineering report as well as conversations with our builder and architect, we feel like the cost of restoring and expanding the existing property would be unreasonably expensive due to the foundation issues, structural problems, the non-standard construction of the additional units in the back, plumbing/wiring that is not up-to-code, and a roof that is collapsing.

Additionally, this particular lot has undergone several changes over the years and is already different than it was during the time period when this neighborhood was built.

We are not proposing to simply take something away from this neighborhood, however. We want to use this lot to build a home. We're excited about creating something that matches the neighborhood and being a part of this community for a long time.

Thank you again for your consideration.  
Sarah and Daniel





# ***Metrotech***

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May 13, 2019

Mr. Daniel Hampton

RE: Structural Integrity Inspection  
1207 E. 9<sup>th</sup> St.  
Austin, Texas 78702

Dear Mr. Hampton:

As requested, I made a site visit on the morning of May 13 at the above referenced property to conduct a visual observation of the foundation and framing members of three single-story residential buildings on the property. The purpose of this inspection is to provide a general assessment of the structural integrity of the building and determine if they are worth salvaging given their current condition.

The main (front) building on the property was built in 1949. It is not clear when both smaller (rear) buildings were constructed. The roof structures of the buildings consist of a combination of metal panels or asphaltic shingles with plywood decks supported on wood rafters that span between the interior and exterior walls. The walls consist of wood studs with sheathing on both sides and sidings on the exterior face. The substructures of the buildings consist of wood floor decks with wood floor joists and beams supported on cinder blocks. The record drawings of the buildings and the geotechnical report of the property was not available for review. According to my experience with projects located in vicinity of this property, the geology of the area generally consists of expansive clayey soil that expand and contract with the variation of subgrade's moisture content.

The following conditions were observed during the site visit:

- Large differential settlements were observed throughout the floor systems. The displacements vary between 2" to 3" from the perimeter to the center of the building.
- The foundation system consists of wood floor joists and beams spanning between cinder blocks that were set directly on the soil without and concrete footing or pier. This foundation system is subject to large movements due to moisture variation in the subgrade and is not adequate for sites with expansive clayey soil.
- Gaps were observed around the door and window frames. These gaps will continue to open or close depending on the foundation movement and compromise the efficiency and performance of the HVAC system.

- Most of the walls are out of plumb due to the differential settlements in the floor system. All the door and window frames are out of square which make the doors and windows hard to operate.
- Some of the roof and floor framing members appear to be rotted and require replacement.
- The roof framing consists of 2x4 wood rafters with variable spacing (between 18" to 30") and span (between 10' to 15') that cannot support the required roof dead and live loads as prescribed by the current building code. Many sections of the roof had already collapsed due to their inadequate framing member.

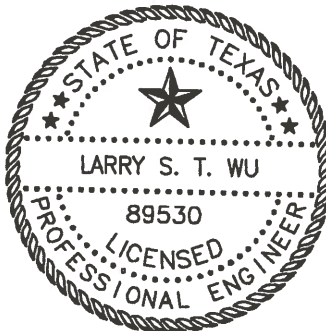
Based on my observations, it is in my opinion that the buildings are not worth salvaging. The foundation systems of the buildings are not adequate for sites with expansive clayey soil. The roof framing members do not meet the current building code. The gaps around the doors and window frames, which will continue to get worse with foundation's differential settlement, makes the building energy inefficient.

Thanks for the opportunity to provide the service. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,



Larry S. T. Wu, P.E.  
Structural Engineer



Opinions and comments stated in this report are based solely on observation of apparent condition. This report does not provide a prediction or warranty on the future performance and/or the need for repair of the structure and other related items.